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ABSTRACT

This report describes an experimental intensive core French program for grades 5 and 6 at Churchill Alternative School in Ottawa (Canada). The aim was to improve the oral French skills of core French students by providing a period of intensive exposure to French and by increasing the total number of hours in French during one program year from 120 to 450. Unlike French immersion, this "bain linguistique" provides a one-time, intensive dose of French with the more limited objective of building oral fluency and preparing students to benefit more from subsequent core French instruction. Participating students were 21 ten- and eleven-year-old students, who received instruction in French during half of the school day (French language arts, physical education, art) and regular instruction in English during the remainder of the day (English language arts, mathematics, science, social sciences). The report summarizes the program's outcomes in student gains in French listening and speaking proficiency and changes in their attitudes toward French study and use. Supporting program materials are appended. (MSE)

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The "Bain Linguistique":

A Core French Experiment

at

Churchill Alternative School

1993-94

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FINAL REPORT
to the
Curriculum Services Department

Ottawa Board of Education

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University of Ottawa
August 1994

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Introduction

In 1993-94, the Ottawa Board of Education set up an experimental intensive Core French program for grade 5 and 6 students, the "bain linguistique," in Churchill Alternative School. Its objective, following the recommendations of the *Core French Report* (Ottawa Board of Education 1992) was to improve the oral French skills results of Core French students by providing a period of intensive exposure to French and by increasing the total number of hours in French during one year of the program from 120 to 450 hours.

Unlike French immersion, which provides intensive exposure to the second language over a period of years and emphasizes school and literacy related language skills, the "bain linguistique" provides a kind of "one-shot" intensive dose of French with the more limited objective of building oral fluency and preparing students to better benefit from the subsequent Core French program. The encouraging results from similar programs for teaching English as a second language in Quebec (Spada and Lightbown 1989) support the rationale that intensive second language exposure is more effective for building fluency at lower proficiency levels than dispersed exposure, and that gains from a limited period of intensive instruction will be maintained once students return to the regular program.

In the Ottawa Board of Education context an intensive intervention at the end of elementary school could serve both to increase the long-term effectiveness of Core French and to ease the transition of students who opt for late-entry immersion in grade seven.

Thirty-one ten and eleven year old pupils took part in the Churchill School experiment, which provided instruction in French during 50% of the school day (French language arts, physical education and art) and regular instruction in English during the remainder of the day (English language arts, mathematics, science and social sciences.) The instructional approach of the "bain linguistique" as it evolved in this experiment initially emphasized theme-related communication activities. These required learners to understand and express context-related meanings using oral French - for example information gap activities, guessing games, role-playing, and the normal physical education and art curricula. As the year progressed, the French teacher reported an increasing language arts emphasis on explanation and demonstration of grammar points that caused difficulty for students or in response to their questions.

This report describes the outcomes of this pilot project in terms of the students' gains in French listening and speaking proficiency and changes in their attitudes toward French study and use. Preliminary research to develop appropriate tests of proficiency in listening comprehension and speaking for this program is reported in detail in Peters (1994).

Research Questions

The questions posed by the researchers were the following:

Proficiency

1- Does the "bain linguistique" result in significant improvement in listening comprehension in French?

2- Does the "bain linguistique" result in significant improvement in oral expression in French?

Attitudes

1- Does the "bain linguistique" result in more positive attitudes towards:
a) second language (L2) learning
b) L2 use
c) future opportunities for L2 learning
d) francophones and French Canadian culture?

2- Do students in the "bain linguistique" develop greater self-confidence when using the second language?

Instruments and Procedures

Proficiency

French listening comprehension and speaking tests were designed to include a series of tasks which test communication skills at different levels of the language system (e.g. vocabulary, discourse). The use of varied tasks helped ensure that individuals would not be disadvantaged by overuse of a particular testing method. These tests are briefly described below. (See Appendix A, B and Peters 1994 for further details.)

French Listening Comprehension test. This test consisted of the following three sub-tests:[1]

Sub-test 1: **Suivre les directives.** Students follow simple instructions by placing words, symbols or phrases in precise positions on a page. (19 items)

[1] The original sub-test 3, **Possible ou impossible?**, in which students are asked to decide if a sentence proposition is possible or not, was dropped from the analyses because of low reliabilities in both testing sessions. The overall reliability of the remaining test, using Cronbach's alpha, was .82.

Sub-test 2: **Lequel est différent?** Students identify the word which is inappropriate in a group of four semantically related words. (5 items)

Sub-test 3: **Conversation entre Frédéric et Martine**. Students answer a series of multiple-choice questions about a taped conversation between two children in a realistic context. (12 items)

Sentence Repetition Task. This test, part of the Où est Nicou?[2] battery developed by OISE for French immersion evaluation (Lapkin, Argue, Lévy, Scane & Swain 1985), was adapted to test oral expression.

Sentence repetition (or "elicited imitation") makes use of a series of phrases - generally well-formed sentences which together form an extended text. These sentences are orally presented to the learner, who repeats each in turn. (See Bley-Vroman & Chaudron 1993; Lapkin, Argue, Lévy, Scane & Swain 1985; Naiman 1974, and Swain, Dumas & Naiman 1974 for discussions of this method). The underlying hypothesis is that a learner who has not yet mastered the grammar of the sentence will be unable to repeat it correctly or to give a comparable version of it, while to the extent that the learner's internalized oral grammar matches that of the sentence, the imitation will be correct (Oller 1979). As Naiman wrote, "In encoding the imitations the child must use the rules of his own production system -- the rules that he would use when producing language spontaneously" (1974:4).

Although elicited imitation lacks the naturalness of an oral interview, it has a number of advantages. It has been shown to be a relatively precise testing method for comparing the oral proficiency (oral grammar, fluency, pronunciation) of different individuals, and a sensitive method for demonstrating proficiency gains during relatively short periods of language instruction. The approach can be adapted to different proficiency levels. Such tests are also relatively easy to administer to a group in a language laboratory. Finally, while the correction process is laborious, requiring written transcription of the sentences, intra- and interrater reliabilities are very high.

Following a pre- and posttest design, both the Listening Comprehension Test and the Sentence Repetition Task were administered on November 19, 1993[3], and May 25, 1994. Thirty-one students took part in the first testing session, 18 from grade 5 and 13 from grade 6. The second testing session involved 28 students, all 18 from grade 5 and 10 of the original 13 from grade 6.

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[2] *The package includes several other tests for grade three immersion students. Their difficulty levels were judged inappropriate for this group of students.*

[3] *This part of the experimental program evaluation was formalized only in October so it was not possible to test students at the beginning of the program in September.*

Attitudes

Information on attitudes was gathered by means of three focus groups with selected members of the experimental class. Focus groups are essentially group interviews which make use of group interaction to gather data and insights. Focus groups were chosen to gather information on attitudes because they have been found to be more effective than more researcher-controlled techniques such as surveys for examining individual perspectives. They are also useful in gathering information from children since they permit participants to make comments which they feel are relevant and to do so in their own words. Group interaction yields greater depth and variety of response by permitting participants to hear others' comments and react to them. Focus groups are also more efficient in terms of time than individual interviews.

The teacher selected 10 students for the three planned focus group sessions based on the following criteria:

1. evenly divided by grade (5 or 6)
2. evenly divided by gender
3. including some students with high proficiency and positive attitudes and some students with low proficiency and less positive attitudes

The 10 were selected from 26 of the 33 students in the class who volunteered to participate in the focus groups.

The first focus group was held on November 16, 1993, approximately ten weeks after the beginning of the program. It was held prior to proficiency testing to avoid any negative washback effect. The second focus group was held on February 8, 1994 to monitor attitudes as the program progressed. The final focus group was held on June 14, 1994 following the final proficiency testing session by several weeks to avoid negative washback. Each of the three focus groups lasted about one hour and was audiotaped in preparation for subsequent transcription and analysis.

A core list of questions was developed for each session (See Appendix C). These were fairly general in nature to permit students to identify what they considered to be the important issues. More specific questions were added as the discussion progressed to expand or narrow the topic or to probe more deeply into an area being discussed.

All 10 students participated in the first focus group. One student was absent for the February session and another for the June session.

Results

Proficiency

The base-line data gathered from the testing sessions indicates that the tests covered a wide range of difficulty, including the appropriate difficulty levels for the group at the beginning and end of the "bain linguistique". While the first listening sub-test was quite easy for this group, its level is nonetheless appropriate for grade 5-6 students in regular Core French programs, so it was retained for eventual comparisons with regular Core French classes. The third listening sub-test and the sentence repetition task were quite challenging for many of the students but yielded valuable information on pre-post gains. These two tasks also make the test appropriate for follow-up studies of these students in later grades.

While all sub-tests showed small absolute differences favouring grade 6 over grade 5 students at both testing times, none of the differences were significant. Due to intra-group variation and differences in proportion of students from each grade, these comparative results cannot be taken as conclusive; however it appears that if differences exist they are minimal. This suggests that regular Core French program students at grade 6 may largely overlap with those at grade 5 (with 120 fewer hours of instruction) on the abilities measured by these tests.

Listening Comprehension Test

Overall results for the Listening Comprehension Test are presented in Table 1. (Results for each sub-test are given in Appendix D).

Table 1
Listening Comprehension Test Scores and Gains, November 1993 - May 1994

	Maximum possible score	Mean X		Standard deviation		Percentage correct	
		Nov.	May	Nov.	May	Nov.	May
Grade 5	46	23.2	28***	3.9	3.6	50.4	60.9
Grade 6	46	24.2	30.4*	7.2	1.8	52.6	66.1
Grade 5\6	46	23.5	28.7***	5.1	3.3	51.1	62.4

Levels of significance for gains based on T-tests for Nov. 93 and May 94 scores are indicated as follows:
*=p< .05 **=p< .01 ***=p< .001

The "bain linguistique" students showed significant and substantial improvement on the Listening Comprehension Test from November to May, both when analyzed as separate grade

5 or grade 6 sub-groups and when analyzed as a combined class. The magnitude of the combined class gains on the this test during the 6 month period (from 51.1% to 62.4% correct) are particularly notable when compared with the (non-significant) difference between grade 5 and grade 6 student scores in November (50.4% to 52.6%). Gain scores for the grade 5 and grade 6 students were not significantly different from one another.

Specific observations regarding students' performance on the various listening tasks at the two sessions include the following:

Sub-test 1:
In November the students had difficulty writing the day and the year which was not a problem in May. Identifying the right and left side of the paper was still difficult for the students at the end of the year.

Sub-test 2:
The vocabulary items about sports, beverages and vegetables were easier for the students on both occasions than the items about careers and tools.

Sub-test 3:
Students in both testing sessions understood at least part of the recorded conversation and were able to identify who had telephoned, when the call was made and what was discussed. However, students had more difficulty remembering the details of the conversation such as what kind of homework was talked about, where the homework was left, although highly significant gains were made by the second session. This task was quite difficult, and reflected the most dramatic gains of the three listening sub-tests.

Sentence Repetition Task

Student repetitions of fifteen sentences were analyzed and four scores were calculated. The first two reflect the ability to understand and reconstruct sentences with correct vocabulary and grammar (total number of words correctly repeated, CW, and longest sequence of words correctly repeated, LCWO). The other two reflect the ability to pronounce and correctly segment French sentences ("pronunciation", PR, and "rhythm", R, scored on a scale of 1-3, ranging from "incomprehensible" to "entirely comprehensible.") Overall results for this test, representing the sum of the four scores, are presented in Table 2, with further details in Appendix D.

Table 2.
FLS Summed Oral Test Scores and Gains, November 1993 - May 1994

	Maximum possible score	Mean X		Standard deviation		Percentage correct	
		Nov.	May	Nov.	May	Nov.	May
Grade 5	206	86.3	110.6*	28.6	31.3	41.9	53.7
Grade 6	206	97.3	126***	24.0	17.7	47.2	61.2
Grade 5\6	206	90	116***	27.2	28.1	44	56.3

Levels of significance for gains based on T-tests for Nov. 93 and May 94 scores are indicated as follows:
*=p< .05 **=p< .01 ***=p< .001

Most students found the Sentence Repetition Task quite difficult in November (X= 44%) and improved their performance in May (X=56.3%). The range of scores in Nov. (39-172) was improved in May (55-195). All twenty-eight students improved their performance in May, some by as much as 38%.

The correlation between the summed proficiency scores (CW + LCWO) and the summed phonological scores (PR + R) was very high (.7), suggesting the importance of the skills which underlie pronunciation (sound discrimination, rhythm, segmentation) in general oral proficiency.

Item difficulties on this test indicate that sentence length did not affect results: students did just as well on short as on long sentences. However, the proportion of nouns compared to pronouns in the sentence appears to be significant: sentences with many pronouns were most difficult for students while sentences with more nouns were easier. Furthermore, sentences with concrete nouns often used in the classroom such as "la classe", "le livre", "le cahier" were quite easy for the students.

Attitudes

The purpose of the three focus groups was to explore the attitudinal development of students participating in the "bain linguistique". The first session established baseline data for comparison with results later in the year. The second session attempted to capture attitudinal changes during the course of the program. The final session investigated the same issues and the opinions expressed were compared to those reported in the previous sessions.

The results of the three focus groups are grouped by the following topics:

1. attitudes towards second language (L2) learning in general, future opportunities for L2 learning,
2. L2 use,
3. students' feelings about francophones and French Canadian culture, and
4. students' self-confidence with respect to L2 use outside the classroom.

Representative quotations from participants in each of the three sessions are given for each topic.

Attitudes towards L2 Learning in General

Student expressed positive attitudes toward the learning of French in all three sessions. No changes in these attitudes were perceived among the students during any of the sessions. (It is not possible to know whether attitudinal changes had occurred between the beginning of the program in September and the first focus group 10 weeks later.) Students felt that there were definite advantages to knowing French for their future pursuits. Few of them seemed aware of what language learning entailed. Nevertheless they all seemed to feel that the "bain linguistique" program was a better way of learning French than the Core program. The only differences noticeable when comparing student comments in the different sessions was that at the beginning, students expected the "bain linguistique" to improve their French more than the Core program and at the end, their comments indicated that it had. They also seemed to have a better grasp of how intricate a process language learning is. Finally on the personal side, they also commented about how participation in the program had made them feel "special".

First focus group. Although the first focus group was held ten weeks after the beginning of the program, students' comments indicate that their attitudes towards the learning of French were positive before the program began and continue to be so.

I like French.

I wouldn't go out of this class. I like it.

Students enumerated the advantages of knowing French for their future:

You have to know French for most jobs, even if you're a waitress or something.

...when I travel all over Europe and all that, big percentages of the countries in Europe speak French.

Some also admitted that their choice to enter the program had been influenced by the choice of their friends.

I wouldn't have any of my friends because a lot of my friends are in the program.

I'd miss all my friends because all my friends are in here.

They seemed to believe that the "bain linguistique" program represented a better way to learn French than the Core program.

You won' t learn as much French [in the regular program].

I like it ['bain linguistique'] because I've always wanted to learn another language. The forty minutes last year - you didn't really learn enough that you could actually speak to somebody.

However, st dents were just becoming aware of the effects of an intensive language learning program. Although they considered this program to be a better way of learning French, they had had little experience with the results of such a program. Several students mentioned their concern with their inability to switch back to English after a morning in French.

I'm finding it kind of hard to adjust because you only get half an hour to go from French to English.

When we get out and talking to our friends, I'm slipping up and talking French and stuff like that.

Second focus group. During the second focus group, students again commented on the benefits of knowing French for future job opportunities.

They also explained the various activities found in their program and spoke of the differences between the "bain linguistique" program and Core French. They felt that they were learning more in the 'bain linguistique' than they had in Core French.

Last year we did Bienvenue D (their textbook) too. But it was a lot easier. That was all we did.

I want to learn more French. You learn more here than in Core [French].

They gave additional personal reasons for entering the "bain linguistique" program.

French is my favourite subject

Miss Neil encouraged me to go into the program because I was ahead.

I didn't want to have the same teacher for three years.

Third focus group. During the final focus group, students outlined why they considered the "bain linguistique" program superior to Core French and what they felt they had accomplished.

> *Last year we just did (learning) centres. That's all we did and it got really boring after a while. And when I got into the (bain linguistique) program we did actually more stuff. We're talking more. We're learning how to say stuff. So it was more interesting than the Core French because all you do - we could talk in English if we really wanted to because the teacher didn't really care. But in this program you talked in French because you learned it and you knew how to talk.*

Students seemed to be able to articulate what they thought they needed to learn to know French and how complex a procedure it was.

> *...but if you want to go on to French immersion, you want to go into maybe even Quebec and live there, heck I don't know, you gotta know how to talk. You can't sit there and go être, je suis. You need to know how to speak to them in their own language.*

> *But it's not just the grammar []. It's more the.. it's the grammar, the writing, the speaking. It's everything combined. You don't really realize it when you're doing the work.*

They also spoke of an added benefit of participation in the "bain linguistique": it made them feel different from other students.

> *I'm glad I came into it (the "bain linguistique" program) because if I hadn't this year, I wouldn't have a chance to next year and it kind of makes [] some people, it might make them feel kind of different.*

> *I'm glad I went into it because it does make you special.*

> *There isn't any another class like this in the school.*

Attitudes towards Future Opportunities for L2 Learning

Student attitudes towards future opportunities for learning French were very positive. All students appeared to be committed to continued study of French. At the beginning of the program, most claimed that they planned to enter late French immersion in Grade 7. However, at the end of the program, while Grade 6 participants still planned to enter LFI, Grade 5 students expressed hesitation. They worried about their ability to retain what they had learned this year if they were enrolled in a Core French program with other students who had not

participated in the program the next year. Neither Grade 6 nor Grade 5 students were prepared to commit themselves to immersion for high school.

First focus group. All focus group participants who were in Grade 6 had expected to go into French immersion in 1993-94. Since that option was no longer available to them, they felt that this program would prepare them for immersion the following year. All but one of the ten focus group participants expected to attend immersion in Grade 7. The remaining student expected to move with his family to an area where immersion would not be available. One student stated:

> *...it sort of prepares you for French immersion for all day French and that's what I know that I wanted to do and most of the people in Grade 6 wanted to do this year- we wanted to go into (late) French immersion at Broadview.*

Second focus group. During this focus group students rephrased their ideas that the "bain linguistique" was preparing them for immersion.

Third focus group. During the final focus group, students also discussed the program in terms of preparation for immersion.

> *For those who are going to French immersion, I mean, you're more prepared.*

However, those who were not going to immersion (Grade 5 students) expressed disappointment. They had believed the program would continue for them in grade 6.

> *I'm a bit mad that they're not going to have it next year. We'll probably forget all the French that we learned this year.*

Some of these Grade 5 students were now more hesitant about late French immersion in Grade 7.

> *I don't think I'm going to French immersion in Grade 7 because I've heard it's harder if you go into French immersion later than if you go at like grade 3 or something. And I might not remember what I learned this year.*

> *I might go to immersion.* I want to but I'm not sure.

Even students who were in Grade 6 were not sure that they would continue with immersion in high school.

> *I'm going to wait and see what happens. Like if I haven't learned that much (in Grade 7 and 8 immersion) then no I won't go in. (to immersion i high school)*

If I do go (to immersion in high school) I'm gonna have to be pretty good 'cause I'm not sure I'll make it if I'm still working at French and I still think that I should know more.

Attitudes towards L2 Use

At the beginning of the program, all students claimed to use French outside the classroom. Additional questions revealed that this represented mainly passive use or practice with non-francophone peers or family members. The few who had encountered francophones described very brief interchanges. During the second focus group, students admitted that they watched TV in French very rarely and never listened to the radio. Some had attended camps and one student had an exchange student in her home. However, they still felt very apprehensive and attempted very little communication. Those who had no opportunities for contact with francophones outside the classroom did not seem concerned. They felt this was in the more distant future. They still seemed to feel that they were preparing for this possibility. During the final focus group, the topic was not discussed. No students mentioned additional meetings with francophones that hadn't been mentioned before. They seemed more concerned with the next year than with what they considered the more distant future.

First focus group. During the first focus group, students were asked if they had had the opportunity to use French outside the classroom. They all mentioned watching some French television: French cartoons, Simpsons in French, hockey games were referred to by several. They also recounted anecdotes about situations in which they had communicated in French:

He (father) took me to this picket line and I was the only one who could understand minimum of three words of what he (francophone) was saying.

And my mom she's taking French classes in the morning [] and so when she comes home she starts speaking in French and so then everybody else is speaking French so then I'm like why don' I start speaking French.

However, few students had ever encountered a francophone peer; none had communicated with one. Those who had opportunities through sports competitions had not attempted communication or did so in English. They appeared to be apprehensive in such situations. Several commented:

...they were talking pretty quickly so it was (like) kind of hard [to understand].

...he talks faster and uses like bigger words than I use.

Students still obviously considered French primarily a classroom subject . Although the "bain linguistique" program included the teaching of gym in French, students found this change from previous years difficult.

I'm not used to playing in the gym in French.

Second focus group. During the second focus group, there was not much change. Students admitted they rarely watched television in French. Some watched "Victor" on Saturday mornings, a program designed for learning French, which they watched regularly in class. They found it easy because they had already seen it once before.

I sometimes watch that show (Victor) 'cause I've already seen it. That makes it easier. I know what's happening.

They said that listening to the radio was even more difficult than television.

A few had had opportunities to meet francophone students and already identified improvements in their ability to communicate:

We have a French exchange student in our house now and I can sort of understand what she's saying to me.

...at Christmas time I went to one of those camps and there was 4 people from Trois-Rivières. And they became my friends. I tried to speak French. I'd try to say as much as I could in French and then the words that I didn't know, I'd say in English. And they'd sort of understand. And also I was with my friend who's in Broadview and she knows more French than I do. And so she translated them.

Students implied that they were not quite ready for communication with francophone peers. They viewed themselves as preparing for this eventuality.

I'm not so worried about it yet because I'm not going anywhere out of this city yet until I know I have enough French. Probably after French immersion.

Maybe at the end of the year I'll try (to talk to a francophone). But if not, then maybe at the end of Grade 8.

Attitudes towards Francophones and French Canadian Culture

Student expressed few opinions about francophones and French Canadian culture. Very few of them had had the opportunity to meet a francophone peer or any francophone outside the classroom. When asked about culture, they seemed to believe that this was mainly history and

geography and claimed that they weren't learning any French Canadian culture. They felt that there wasn't time in the program for this.

During the final focus group, some students mentioned writing letters to a group of francophone students in Montréal. The Montréal students replied in English. They commented on how much better they felt about their French when they read the letters written in English by these students. However, they made no other comments and the exercise was not repeated.

They also spoke about Annie, whom they referred to as their student teacher. She was a francophone monitor who came to their class every Wednesday morning. She was very popular with the students and they felt that they had learned a lot from her.

> *Well it kind of let us learn more just talking to her kind of. I don't know about everyone else but she was kind of a friend to me and I could talk to her a lot. Like if I had problems then I could talk to her.*

> *But you don't really learn how to speak or how to speak Québécois French (during the regular classroom activities). They have a different accent. And they use a lot of slang as well. One of the games our student teacher Annie showed us, gave us some expressions.*

Self-confidence in Using French

During the first focus group students seemed quite confident in their ability to use French. However, most examples they gave represented practice at home with relatives or with classmates. Those who had had the opportunity to use their French with francophones described very brief interchanges in which they asked for or gave information. They felt that having a conversation with a francophone would be very difficult if not impossible. During the second focus group, students appeared to feel better prepared for interaction with francophones but thought that there would be more improvement at the end of the year or after immersion (see Attitudes towards L2 use).

During the final focus group, students appeared very confident. Students were sure that their communication skills had reached a level where they would have no difficulties understanding the teacher in immersion next year or making themselves understood with other immersion students.

> *...'cause when you go into French immersion next year there's going to be... well, speaking for those who are going to French immersion, I mean you're more prepared and you're not going to be all out. I mean you've only had Core French and you're sitting there wondering what the heck the teacher's talking about.*

Well I think most of us would be able to speak conversations with people in other schools that are different - like French immersion. I think the grade 6's are probably ready for it.

They expressed confidence in their listening comprehension:

Last year when the teacher did talk French, I understood her a little bit. But not everything. ...people understand what the teacher is saying in French. Most of the people. I can understand every word she says.

They were also confident in their ability to read French.

...now we can read because we have our little Français 1, Français 2 and Bibliobus. And also she got from the library Tintin, and some people really like to read those. And Astérix too.

They felt they were able to write much better and much more than last year:

If you were to go back to Core French, we got a sentence to write on such and such a thing, a sentence to write on that. Now it's you've got to write a paragraph on this and you've gotta be able to describe this. Not just a sentence of describing but say five. But we're not trying sentences anymore. We've passed that.

But they were particularly confident in their ability to speak French.

I think that especially the speaking has gone up a lot. Ahm, I don't know about anyone else but I can do a conversation as I said before and I couldn't do that before. I could say like a couple of words but that would be it.

I remember a time, I think it was two years ago [] I went to a French sports camp and (like) I couldn't speak to them 'cause I didn't know any French 'cause it was two years ago. But if I went back now, I could probably speak to them.

Conclusions

The proficiency test and focus group results confirm observations by school personnel, parents and the "bain linguistique" students themselves that they have significantly and substantially improved both their listening comprehension skills and their speaking skills in French during the program and that student enthusiasm for the program was high throughout the year.

The significance and magnitude of listening and oral gain scores when compared with the non-significant grade 5 versus grade 6 differences in the group in November suggest that the

intensive exposure was probably much more effective than a similar number of instructional hours spread over a much longer period of time might have been.

In terms of attitudinal development, the most significant change appears to have been in students' self-confidence in using French. (Student attitudes towards learning French seemed very positive even before the beginning of the program and most seemed committed to continued language learning at the end.) At the beginning of the year few of the students felt able to understand spoken French or capable of sustained, spontaneous speech, even about highly familiar topics, whereas at the end of the year most seemed quite confident in their ability to understand and converse in French in most classroom situations. Although few students appear to have had opportunities for contact with francophones outside the classroom, those who had such experiences felt that the 'bain linguistique' program had improved their oral skills enough to permit serviceable if limited communication.

The evident improvement in learners' oral French skills and self-confidence indicates that the experimental program met its objectives, and that the extra hours spent in the second language were profitable. The self-selection of students, dedication and creativity of the French teacher, commitment of parents and a supportive school situation are other factors which almost certainly contributed to the experiment's success. On the other hand, perception of the program's effectiveness during the year by those involved would also have served to reinforce their commitment to it.

To demonstrate the comparative, long-term effect of such a "bain linguistique", and its generalizability to other situations, comparative longer term experimentation and research involving "bain linguistic" and Core French classes in varied school situations would be required. In such a project, thought would also have to be given to altering the subsequent Core French program to take advantage of gains made by students in the "bain linguistique".

The clear success of the 1993-94 Churchill School experiment should in any case receive full recognition, and be taken as an indication of a promising path for increasing the effectiveness of Core French in the Ottawa Board of Education in the future.

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Appendix A

Description des tests de compétence pour le "bain linguistique", 1993-94

Le contenu choisi pour les deux premiers sous-tests était axé sur une variété de vocabulaire: le vocabulaire d'orientation sur une page *"en haut, à droite, sur la première ligne, à côté de...etc..."* et un vocabulaire thématique: sports, légumes, animaux. Ce vocabulaire a été choisi parce qu'il faisait partie du vocabulaire déjà vu ou entendu en salle de classe dans le programme de l'enseignante du bain linguistique. Le contenu des deux autres sous-tests portait sur la compréhension d'une phrase et la compréhension d'un texte. Le sujet des phrases du sous-test 3 était simple et familier pour les élèves. Ceux-ci devaient juger si le sens de la phrase était possible ou impossible. Par exemple: *"Le garçon s'envole dans le ciel"*. L'élève devait répondre que la phrase était impossible. Le texte du sous-test 4 était une longue conversation téléphonique authentique enregistrée. Plusieurs aspects de la vie scolaire, tels une discussion à propos de devoirs, une entente entre deux camarades, se retrouvaient dans la conversation.

Pour le test d'expression orale, le test d'imitation de phrases de *Où est Nicou?* (Lapkin, Argue, Lévy, Scane et Swain, 1985) a été utilisé. Pour les deux objectifs, la section orale du test a été divisée en deux sous-tests. Les deux sous-tests reflétaient différents critères d'évaluation appliqués à la même performance des élèves: un sous-test de compétence générale et un sous-test de compétence de prononciation\syllabation.

Le sous-test de compétence générale vérifiait si l'élève avait une compétence grammaticale surtout en ce qui a trait aux prépositions, pronoms, verbes "être" et "avoir" et des tournures de phrases impersonnelles. Le lexique de l'élève était aussi mesuré en examinant les substitutions effectuées par l'élève.

Le sous-test de compétence de prononciation\syllabation évaluait deux aspects. La prononciation, c'est-à-dire la façon dont les phonèmes sont prononcés, et la syllabation ou la répartition des suites sonores en syllabes (voir chapitre trois, section A-2). Ces deux aspects ont été évalués afin de vérifier s'il y avait une corrélation entre la prononciation\syllabation et la compétence générale. L'élève qui prononce bien et qui peut segmenter correctement les mots a-t-il une meilleure compétence générale en expression orale?

Les objectifs et le contenu pour chaque sous-tests sont résumés ci-dessous.

Tableau 2
Plan du test
Objectifs et contenu:

Objectif général: Évaluer les gain obtenus afin de pouvoir comparer les résultats.

		objectifs	contenu
Section de compréhension auditive	sous-test 1	pouvoir suivre des directives pour réaliser une tâche	vocabulaire d'orientation sur une page
	sous-test 2	pouvoir reconnaître les différentes relations sémantiques entre les mots	vocabulaire thématique: sports, légumes, animaux
	sous-test 3	pouvoir inférer le sens d'une phrase	phrases décrivant des situations possibles et impossibles
	sous-test 4	pouvoir écouter, se souvenir et comprendre une conversation dans une situation familière	conversation entre deux élèves au sujet de devoirs
Section d'expression orale	sous-test 1	pouvoir répéter correctement de façon grammaticale et avec le lexique approprié en français	phrases résumant le texte de *Où est Nicou?*
	sous-test 2	pouvoir prononcer et segmenter correctement des phrases en français.	

Appendix B Answer sheet

Sub-test 1

Suivre les directives:
Following Directions:

The information will be repeated twice. After you have heard the information, you can do the task.

	-	

x **x**

Sub-test 2

Lequel est différent?
Which one is different?

You will hear series of words, each containing 5 words. In each series, one word does not belong. Make an X in the box corresponding to the word that does not belong.

Exemple:

1	2	3	4	5
	X			

Exemple:

1	2	3	4	5

	1	2	3	4	5
A					
B					
C					
D					
E					

Sub-test 3 **Conversation entre Frédéric et Martine.**

Read the questions before you hear the conversation. You will hear the conversation twice. Listen to the conversation and put an X in the correct answer box.

1- La conversation a lieu
- a) le matin, ☐
- b) l'après-midi ☐
- c) le soir. ☐

2- D'après toi, les deux personnes
- a) se connaissent, ☐
- b) ne se connaissent pas. ☐

3- C'est Frédéric qui appelle Martine.
- a) vrai ☐
- b) faux ☐

4- La personne qui appelle veut
- a) inviter ☐
- b) donner des renseignements ☐
- c) demander des renseignement. ☐

5- Pendant la conversation, ils parlent d'une joute
- a) de football, ☐
- b) de base-ball, ☐
- c) de hockey. ☐

6- Ces deux personnes sont
- a) des travailleurs ☐
- b) des élèves ☐
- c) des téléphonistes. ☐

7- La joute de hockey commence dans
- a) vingt minutes, ☐
- b) une demi-heure, ☐
- c) une heure. ☐

8- Frédéric fait son devoir
- a) de français ☐
- b) d'histoire ☐
- c) de mathématiques. ☐

9- Le devoir est
- a) difficile, ☐
- b) facile. ☐

10- Martine parle
- a) trop vite, ☐
- b) pas assez vite, ☐
- c) lentement. ☐

11- Martine jouait
- a) avec sa soeur, ☐
- b) avec son frère, ☐
- c) avec son amie. ☐

12- Frédéric a oublié son cartable
- a) dans son casier, ☐
- b) dans son bureau, ☐
- c) dans l'autobus. ☐

APPENDIX C

Focus Groups - Attitudinal Outcomes of the
"Bain Linguistique" Outline of Questions

November 16, 1993

1. How do you feel about learning French this year?

   Probe: Tell me what makes you feel this way.
   What kinds of experiences make you feel this way?
   Is it different from the way you learned French before?

2. Have you had a chance to try out **your French** outside of class? Tell me about it.

   Probe: with whom?
   where?
   TV, radio, books, mags, newspapers

3. Do you intend to continue with French next year? Why or why not?

February 7, 1994

1. How do you feel about the 'bain linguistique' program now that you know what it's all about?

   Probe: What kind(s) of activities make you feel this way?
   What is the purpose of these activities?

2. Where and how do you use French?

   Probe: Why are you learning French?
   What would you like to be able to do in French?
   When do you think you will be able to do these things?
   How will you learn to do them?

June 14, 1994

1. How do you feel about the program now that it's almost over? What difference has it made?

   Probe: What did you gain?
   What did you lose?

2. What are your plans for French and French study for the future?

   Probe: What are you doing next year? Why?
   Will you be able to use your French more?

APPENDIX D

Proficiency Test Results: Sub-test Analyses

1. FSL Listening Comprehension sub-tests: Comparisons of pre-test and post-test means:

Table A. Sub-test 1: Suivre les directives:

	Maximum possible score	Mean X		Standard deviation		Percentage correct	
		Nov.	May	Nov.	May	Nov.	May
Grade 5	19	15.2	17	3.6	2.20	80%	90%
Grade 6	19	16.7	18.2	2.5	1.47	88%	96%
Grade 5 \ 6	19	16	17.5*	3.2	2.04	83%	92%

Levels of significance for gains based on T-tests for Nov. 93 and May 94 scores are indicated as follows:
*=p< .05 **=p< .01 ***=p< .001

This sub-test was easy for the students in November(X= 83%) and in May (X= 92%). It helped make the students comfortable while providing needed information on their names and grade. The grade 6 students did slightly but not significantly better than the grade 5 students on both testing sessions.

Table B. Sub-test 2: Lequel est différent?

	Maximum possible score	Mean X		Standard deviation		Percentage correct	
		Nov.	May	Nov.	May	Nov.	May
Grade 5	5	3.0	3.4	0.75	0.76	60%	69%
Grade 6	5	3.2	3.4	0.79	0.66	64%	68%
Grade 5 \ 6	5	3.0	3.4*	0.8	0.73	61%	68.6%

Levels of significance for gains based on T-tests for Nov. 93 and May 94 scores are indicated as follows:
*=p< .05 **=p< .01 ***=p< .001

There were 5 items on this sub-test. The items for this sub-test should be re-ordered from easy to difficult in subsequent testing. The mean improvement from November to May was from 61% in November to 69% in May (9% for the grade 5 students and 4% for the grade 6 students).

Table C. Sub-test 3: Conversation entre Martine et Frédéric

	Maximum possible score		Mean X		Standard deviation		Percentage correct	
	Nov.	May	Nov.	May	Nov.	May	Nov.	May
Grade 5	12	12	4.6	7.4	3.09	2.49	38%	62%
Grade 6	12	12	5.3	8.8	2.62	1.54	44%	73.3%
Grade 5 \ 6	12	12	5.0	7.9***	3	2.29	41%	66%

Levels of significance for gains based on T-tests for Nov. 93 and May 94 scores are indicated as follows: *=p< .05 **=p< .01 ***=p< .001

The 12 questions on this sub-test were quite difficult for the students in November (X=41%). This sub-test differentiated best among the students on both occasions and also best reflected gains from November to May (to 66%). The grade 6 students had a slightly higher average at the start of the school year and mayntained this advantage over the grade 5 students, but again these differences were not significant.

2. Sentence Repetition (Elicited Imitation) Results

Table D. Sentence Repetition Test, Frequency Distribution

scores range	# of students	
	Nov.	May
0-25	0	0
25-50	1	0
50-75	10	2
75-100	13	6
100-125	5	12
125-150	1	6
150-175	1	2
175-206	0	0
total	31	28

As would be expected, the students scored substantially higher on the number of words correctly repeated (CW) than in the number of words correctly repeated in correct order (LCWO), even though the two were very highly correlated. This has two possible explanations; one is that students remembered some individual words from the tape without understanding the meaning of the sentence, and the second is that word order is still a problem for these students, so that their reconstructed phrases were often out of sequence.